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Alabama Department of Public Safety

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DL Identity Theft Case Leads to Capture, Arrest in Ohio

State Trooper Fraud Investigators Return Suspect to Alabama

MONTGOMERY — A six-month identity theft and driver license fraud investigation led Alabama state troopers to Ohio Wednesday, where Department of Public Safety Driver License Fraud investigators arrested a subject facing 26 felony charges, at least seven misdemeanors, forgery and escape charges after assuming his brother's identity.

The troopers traveled to Washington County, Ohio, to pick up Ricky Joe Dean Morgan, 35, of Hamilton, and transport him back to the Colbert County Jail to face identity theft and driver license fraud charges in Alabama.

DPS Director Col. J. Christopher Murphy said identity theft and driver license fraud are criminal acts that cost individuals and businesses millions of dollars annually. He said a suspect typically establishes a false identity in someone else's name and then uses that assumed identity to defraud banks, retailers and other institutions.

Murphy said Public Safety is committed to combating driver license fraud and identity theft and praised the work of state trooper fraud investigators. "Our trooper fraud investigators are on the job every day to protect Alabamians from criminals who victimize others through identity theft and fraud involving a driver license," he said.

"These troopers are highly trained, skilled and dedicated to the job. They are intent on protecting the innocent victim, in this particular case and in other similar crimes. I am extremely proud of them and commend their work to see this suspect behind bars and bring this case to a successful conclusion," Murphy said.

The case first came to the attention of Driver License investigators in May, when the portrait validation program of Alabama's licensing system identified the photos on an Alabama driver license and a separate non-driver identification card as identical, while the other demographic information on the two documents, including name and address, differed.

Early investigation by Public Safety's fraud investigators confirmed Morgan as the offender. Working with the Department of Corrections, investigators determined that Morgan was wanted for escape, having fled house arrest in Marion County in 2007 after he was released from prison.

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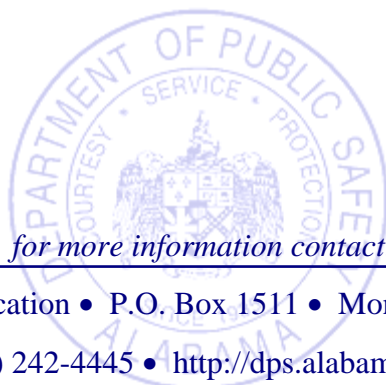
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The investigation indicates that, shortly thereafter, in an attempt to elude authorities, Morgan obtained a driver license in his brother's name. Investigators determined that Morgan subsequently opened several credit accounts and wrote numerous worthless checks while fraudulently using his brother's identity. He also became the subject of several active criminal cases.

Public Safety's months-long investigation incorporated a variety of investigative techniques and involved contact with law enforcement and licensing agencies in several states, including Alaska, Texas and New Mexico. The investigation eventually led to Morgan's location and arrest in July by authorities in Ohio, where Morgan, under the brother's identity he had assumed, was wanted in connection with several worthless checks criminal cases. It was in Ohio that Alabama state troopers caught up with Morgan.

Murphy said Alabama has established one of the most secure, technologically advanced driver licensing systems in the country. Public Safety works to assure integrity of the system and guard the public's safety through an aggressive program to combat driver license fraud and identity theft, he said. Last year, in the course of processing driver license applicants, troopers made more than 4,000 arrests on charges ranging from failure to appear, felony fraud, forgery, robbery, larceny, child neglect, rape, parole violations, and firearms violations.

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